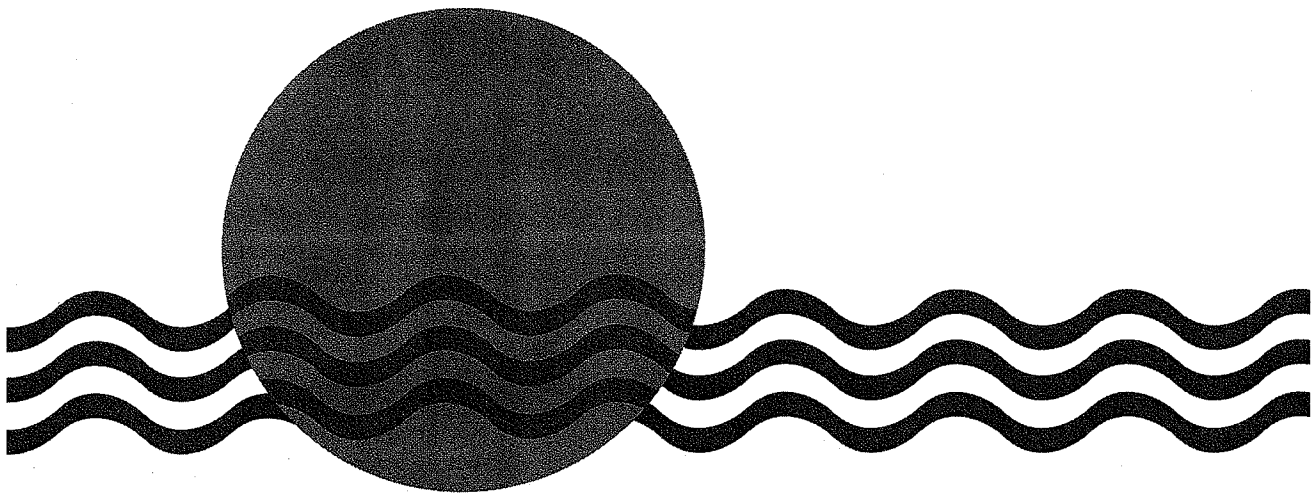




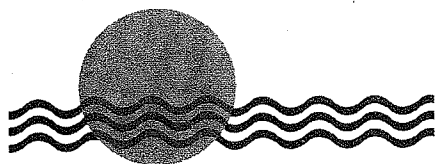
let
Justice
flow like a mighty river

BRIEF BY THE CANADIAN CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS
TO THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

TEXT AND WORKSHOP MODELS



CANADIAN CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS



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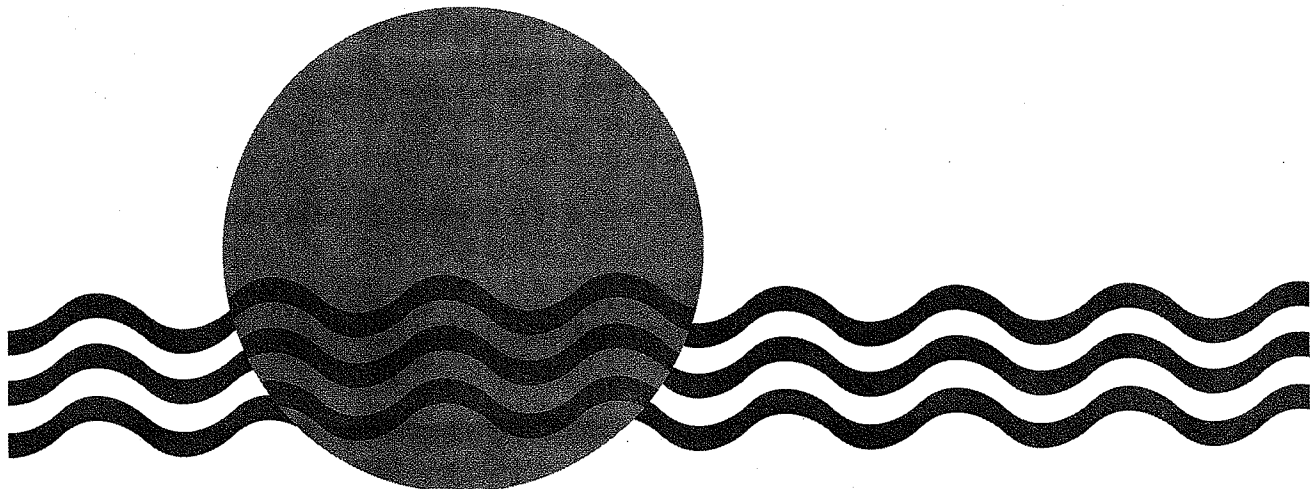
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Table of Contents



| | |
|--|----|
| Foreword | 6 |
| CCCB Brief to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples | 9 |
| Workshop One The River of Then and Now | 48 |
| Workshop Two River of Justice/Waters of Salvation – Charting a Course | 56 |
| Resources for Additional Study | 60 |





Foreword

Let Justice Flow Like a Mighty River is the title of the brief that was presented by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCC) to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples on November 8, 1993. During a two-day special consultation with the Royal Commission and the other historic mission churches,¹ CCCC delegates were invited to share our hope and confidence in the strength of the Aboriginal Peoples of this country. We were called together to review our mission history with Aboriginal Peoples, particularly with respect to spirituality, culture and residential schools; to reflect on the churches' role in supporting the Aboriginal Peoples' struggle for political, social and economic justice; and to strengthen the promise of the future for all of us.

In the brief, the CCCC makes eleven commitments concerning education, social and economic justice, residential schools, aboriginal spirituality, Native leadership, self-government and land claims. It also sets out seven recommendations to the Royal Commission on various issues: public education, racism, employment equity, residential schools, land claims and post-secondary education. The publication of the brief in conjunction with the two workshops in this booklet is a concrete step towards fulfilling the CCCC's commitment to education within the Catholic community.

We are aware that this is a complex subject. The workshop materials are designed to stimulate discussion on *some* aspects of *some* of the issues. It is hoped that participants will be encouraged to seek out other resources and to contact and work with Aboriginal Peoples in their own communities.

¹ "Historic mission churches" is a term used by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples to designate the Anglican, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian and United Churches, which have a longstanding mission history in Canada. These four churches were involved in the management of Indian residential schools.



The general objectives of the workshops are to increase awareness of the rights and concerns of Aboriginal Peoples; to inform the Catholic community about the position of church leaders on these matters; to transform attitudes and behaviour towards Aboriginal Peoples; and to prepare people to receive the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. A more specific goal is to make the contents of the CCCB's brief to the Royal Commission more widely known.

The workshops in this booklet are prepared primarily for non-aboriginal Catholic adults; however, they can be used in cross-cultural reflection groups. Although the brief and the workshops can be a resource for individual study, the booklet is designed for study groups, to allow a fuller sharing and broader understanding of the spiritual, cultural, political and economic dimensions of this historic moment in the life of the Aboriginal Peoples in this country.

In the course of the two workshops, participants are invited to celebrate what has been gained in the historical relationship between the Christian churches and the Aboriginal Peoples, but also to acknowledge and lament what has been lost and the suffering that persists today through centuries of colonization. In the workshops, groups will be analyzing the challenge of Aboriginal self-determination in light of authentic social, economic and cultural development that guarantees respect for the dignity of individuals and peoples. These are foundational principles in the tradition of Catholic social teaching.

We hope that the collective reflection occasioned by these workshops will contribute to a greater understanding of the spiritual dimension of the journey of Aboriginal Peoples towards self-determination and will facilitate community action. For us as Christians, to struggle together with Aboriginal Peoples is to affirm our belief in the vastness of the Spirit of God.

Members of the CCCB Executive

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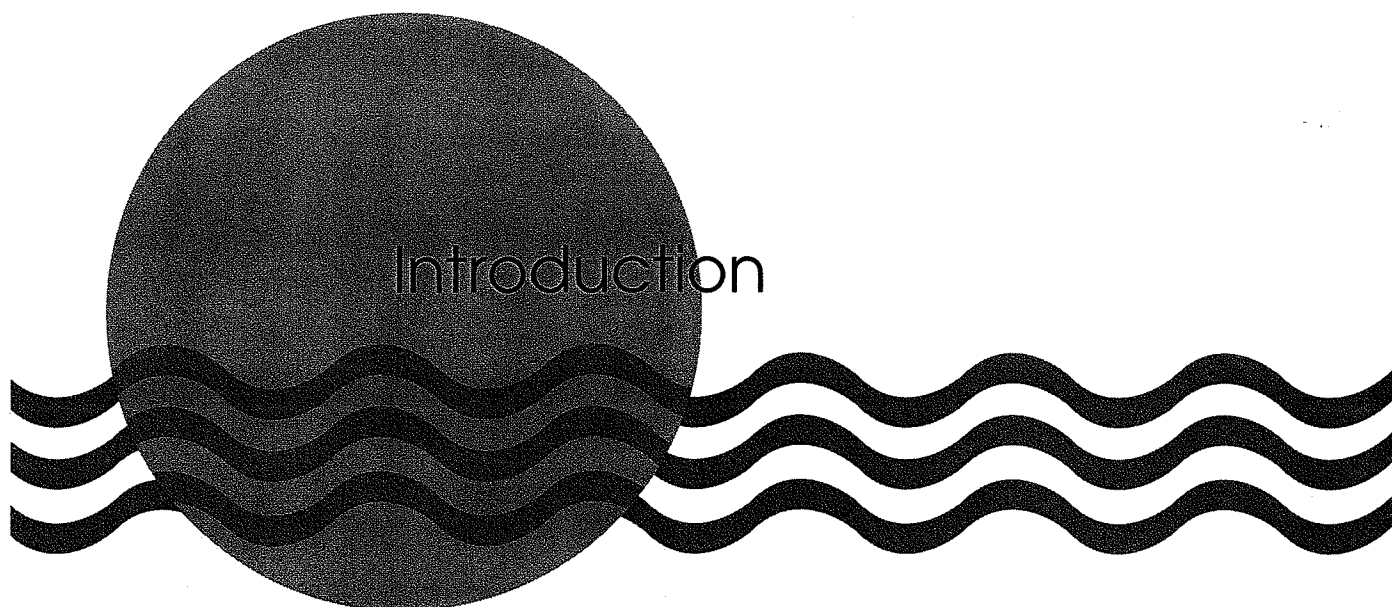
Archbishop Jean-Claude Turcotte

October 26, 1994



LET JUSTICE FLOW
LIKE A MIGHTY RIVER

CCCB Brief to the Royal Commission
on Aboriginal Peoples



PEOPLE OF WATER AND THE SPIRIT

As people of the Church, we believe in a long stream of faith originating in vast and mysterious waters of the Spirit.

For those who believe in Christ, these gracious waters have always beckoned, promising and sustaining a hope for transformation and a better world. As believers, we are convinced that our Church is a community created by water and the Spirit.

As Christians, we also know that our history has been muddied at times by human weakness and by what we call sinfulness. We also admit and regret that we have not always fully recognized the Aboriginal Peoples as our brothers and sisters, as another people of water and the Spirit. Nevertheless, we believe that we are summoned together to help make justice flow like a mighty river. Our faith in the transforming power of water and the Spirit gives us hope – for ourselves and others.

In this presentation to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples we, as Roman Catholic Bishops of Canada, will speak about our hope and confidence in the strength of the Aboriginal Peoples of this country. We wish to discuss the past we have shared with them, a past with cloudy waters and with streams of clear goodness. We also want to strengthen the promise of the future for all of us in our country – a promise which depends significantly on the commitments and recommendations that will be made by this Royal Commission.



1 THE RIVER OF THEN AND NOW

EARLY CONTACTS

In the course of time, the people who came from over the seas met the Aboriginal Peoples of this continent. The newly arrived Europeans encountered a people who welcomed the strangers to their land. They travelled into this land through the great waterway of the St. Lawrence River. Later there were other rivers which opened to the west and the north and to more vastness of land.

Unfortunately, because empire building was the project of these Europeans, the waterways were treated primarily as roads to battle and avenues of exploitation. On their travels they were accompanied by the first Christian missionaries who were responding to the call to "go and teach all nations". Together they met the people of these waters and this land.

Initially, Aboriginal Peoples became commercial partners in the fur trade and allies in the colonial wars between the British and the French. A certain mutuality characterized the relationship until the end of hostilities with the United States at the close of the war of 1812.

When the battles ended and the focus of the Europeans shifted from conquest to building a nation state, the military alliances with Aboriginal Peoples ended. The economic partnership eroded at around the same time with the marginalization of the fur trade. No longer allies and partners, Native Peoples became viewed as a problem. They were regarded as obstacles in the way of new settlers and immigrants, or as wards in need of government protection and rehabilitation. In the 19th Century the government alternated between aggressively pursuing the removal of Aboriginal Peoples from desired lands and a policy which included displacing, settling and



“rehabilitating” Native Peoples to be assimilated into the structures of the developing nation.¹

MISSIONARY ACTIVITY

The first Christian missionaries arrived with the armies of the empires and the merchants of the fur trade. In New France, some were prepared to accommodate themselves to various aspects of Native cultures.² Their disillusionment with colonial society and their willingness to participate in Native village life allowed them to develop a vision of mission that was supportive of Native culture and less predisposed to practices that favour assimilation. By the middle of the 19th Century, however, a model of Christian mission was developing which, though differing in many ways from the programme of the dominant culture, was growing in a symbiotic relationship with the forces of nation-building and the projects of expansion and assimilation.

There were always those missionaries who established relationships with Native Peoples that were marked by profound respect and mutuality as well as dedicated service. While some of their actions may be criticized today in light of new understandings, they were first and foremost men and women of the Gospel who, within their human limitations, tried to act with love and compassion. Their memory has never been abandoned by the people that they served.

¹ See J.R. Miller, Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada, (Toronto, Buffalo, London, University of Toronto Press, 1991, pp. 102-104) for a brief recounting of the disruptive force of the policy of Lieutenant Governor Sir Francis Bond Head, as well as the "humanitarian" efforts of the Churches and the Aborigines Protection Society of 1936.

² The first missionaries were a branch of the Franciscans known as Récollets. Although they generally restricted their activity to the territory around Quebec and the Montagnais of that region, in 1615, under the direction of Joseph Le Caron, they set out to work among tribes connected to the Huron. Their refusal to accept hospitality and their insistence on working out of a stable European settlement doomed their effort. In contrast, the willingness of Jean Brébeuf and other Jesuit missionaries to live in Huron villages, as a part of a trade agreement between the Hurons and Samuel de Champlain, created conditions of greater reciprocity. Henry W. Bowden in American Indians and Christian Missions: Studies in Cultural Conflict (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1981, pp. 59-95) contrasts the two approaches and explores the convergences between the spirituality of the Huron and the Society of Jesus.



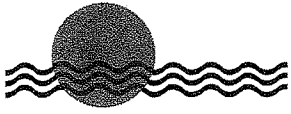
However, it must be acknowledged that the missionary endeavour was deeply marked by the prevailing attitudes of the superiority of European culture. When this conviction was translated into social action in the 19th Century, it manifested itself in a paternalistic model of charity which at times expressed itself as protection of Native rights and freedoms and at other times took the form of coercion and control.

The Church's objectives were incorporated into the social, cultural and political objectives of the government and the wider society. Although not the sole instigators of social and cultural disruption, missionary and educational activities contributed at times to the cumulative result – the weakening of the spirit of Aboriginal Peoples.

Most of the men and women who engaged in missionary activity did so because of a sincere desire to share what was most precious to them – a profound belief that those who are born of water and the Spirit will live forever. They were generous, courageous and even holy men and women. Nevertheless, their perspective was necessarily limited by their own experience. They did not then, as few of us do today, have a sense of the vastness and diverse manifestations of the Spirit of God. Their commitment to the European expression of Christian tradition made it more difficult to recognize the Aboriginal Peoples as people of water and the Spirit. As a result, these missionaries sometimes legitimated forms of cultural and spiritual domination.

The Catholic bishops of Quebec, in reflecting on the past in their Pastoral Letter on the Aboriginal Issue, said:

The limits of policies and services put in place, as well as those of the work done by Churches and many groups, are not due to a lack of good faith but to the then prevailing ideas on civilization, progress, culture and religious values. Aboriginals have also benefited from educational and health care systems and from political, social and judicial institutions. Admittedly in the light of what we know today, these systems, services and institutions could have had much more positive results had they been inspired, from the very start, by a greater respect for peoples concerned, a better appreciation of their cultures and customs, a keener attention to their own vision of reality, and had they aimed at making these peoples architects of their own development and partners in common projects. (September 1992, paragraph 11)



There are indeed long shadows over the waters of the history that the Church has shared with the Native Peoples. And there are ripples of light that reach us even now. The Church has walked with Aboriginal Peoples, shared their joys, their sufferings and their aspirations, and supported their struggles for recognition of their rights for personal and collective growth. Then and now, the Churches provide a place where Native and non-Native Peoples may find common ground. Non-Native Church members have accompanied Native Peoples on their journey – sometimes leading, sometimes following, and sometimes side by side.

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

There are many tales of solidarity, of genuine love and friendship which took place between missionaries and Native Peoples. Yet, there are other stories which continue to emerge, of oppression and even abuse of Native Peoples within the institutions administered by the Church. The shocking revelations about the various types of abuse experienced at some residential schools have moved us to a profound examination of conscience as a Church. We who share in the blessings of the Church must also bear the burden of its past. Several Church groups and religious congregations have made public statements arising from their examination of conscience.³

Following a three-day session on the residential schools' experience in Saskatoon, March 13-15, 1991, Catholic bishops and leaders of men and women religious communities stated:

We are sorry and deeply regret the pain, suffering and alienation that so many experienced. We have heard their cries of distress, feel their anguish and want to be part of the healing process....

All dioceses in which residential schools were located and that are represented here agree to set up, in collaboration with Aboriginal Peoples, a process for disclosure, which respects confidentiality, and for healing of the wounds of any sexual abuse that occurred in residential schools. (emphasis added)

³ See the Oblate Conference of Canada, An Apology to the First Nations of Canada, July 24, 1991; the Bishops' Advisory Committee, Pastoral Letter on Native Issues in Manitoba, January 20, 1993; Father Kolvenbach, the Superior General of the Jesuits, Apology to Native Americans for Past Mistakes, Idaho, May 16, 1993.



The dioceses also committed themselves to establishing

...local forums of dialogue and other avenues for listening that will bring together former students and their families and the religious, clergy and lay staff who were involved in the schools so that they may reflect on their experience and work towards healing and reconciliation.

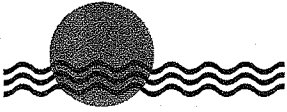
In the past two years, healing conferences and school reunions have provided occasions for former students of residential schools to express the sense of loss, vulnerability, shame, and diminishment that has haunted them into their adult life. In the past few years, these have been settings where the memories are expressed and to some extent the burden shared. Out of these sessions has emerged a renewed sense of urgency to heal the brokenness in Native communities and Native families.

As anticipated at the Saskatoon Conference, approaches to healing and reconciliation are most effective on the local and personal level. Nonetheless, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and the men and women religious communities are working together through the National Catholic Working Group on Native Residential Schools to support these local efforts, to share information and resources, and to understand the meaning and effect of the residential school experience.

We cannot and do not want to deny our collective past. To do so would be to lose sight of our common future. However, justice and healing concern not only the Churches but also the whole of Canadian society. The Indian residential schools were initiated by the federal government, sustained by government funds and Native Peoples' funds that the government administered, and supervised by government officials. Far from being clandestine, the government's policy concerning the schools was expressed repeatedly, openly, and publicly. It reflected the political and social thinking of the time, and enjoyed general public support. The role that government envisioned for residential schools was expressed in the Department of Indian Affairs' Annual Report of 1889:⁴

The boarding school disassociates the Indian child from the deleterious home influences to which he would otherwise be subjected. It

⁴ J.R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada*, p. 196.



reclaims him from the uncivilized state in which he has been brought up. It brings him into contact from day to day with all that tends to effect a change in his views and habits of life.

Historian John Webster Grant⁵ rightly asserts that the residential approach to schooling was designed to have a total impact on the habits and personality patterns of the children. As such, the system was dangerously flawed by the policy underlying it which was fundamentally racist. In addition, many of the difficulties encountered in the residential school system were compounded by insufficient government funding.⁶ Inadequate housing, classrooms, and even food were frequently cited in government reports.

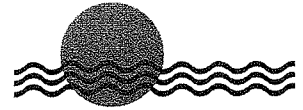
One of the consequences of this parsimonious approach by government to Native education was that student labour which began as part of their education, became a financial necessity. From the beginning, government agents contemplated a self-sustaining system no longer depending on the public purse. In 1847, Egerton Ryerson, Chief Superintendent of common schools for Upper Canada, optimistically concluded that "with judicious management these establishments will be able in the course of a few years to support themselves."⁷

Although they may have become a symbol of the disintegration of Native culture and a lightning rod for anger about this historical period, the residential schools were only a part of the overall government strategy to assimilate or integrate the Native Peoples. Neither justice nor healing can take place without significant participation of the federal government and

⁵ John Webster Grant, *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter Since 1534* (Toronto, Buffalo, London, University of Toronto Press, 1984), pp. 167-189.

⁶ Thomas Lascelles, OMI, "Indian Residential Schools," in *The Canadian Catholic Review*, May 1992 (pp. 6-13), documents that, in 1892, a per capita grant arrangement was established which provided \$110.00 to \$145.00 per year per student in the industrial school system, and \$72.00 per year in the boarding schools which were situated closer to reserves. By 1924, each of the schools operated on a grant of about \$21,689.16 per year. He also cites Anglican officials' declaration to the Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons, that in the previous year they had contributed over \$65,000.00 to Indian education out of their own funds. In turn, the Roman Catholic delegation testified that they had put out \$110,000.00 to build Fort Chipewyan school. A letter from the Provincial of the Sisters of St. Ann in 1927 illustrates this point. She wrote "I know how surprised he [Duncan Campbell Scott] would be to learn that for the last sixty years each sister has been receiving approximately 50 cents a day for about 14 hours labour."

⁷ J.R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada*, p. 107.



the rest of Canadian society. Residential schools were manifestations of the wider problem of how government and the rest of Canadian society related and still relate to Native Peoples.

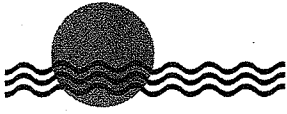
Researchers estimate that a minority of Native children attended residential schools.⁸ Yet, it is clear that many of the signs of disenfranchisement and dislocation are equally evident in Native communities which never experienced the reality of residential schools. It is imperative today to confront both the individual and social causes of the profound powerlessness and marginalization of Native Peoples that has existed over several generations.⁹ Aboriginal Peoples will need all of their spiritual and social resources, all of their creative powers, and all of their hope and courage to address responsibly the challenges facing them as individuals and as communities.

In the encounter between the non-Natives and Aboriginal Peoples, much was gained and lost. The missionaries lived among the Aboriginal Peoples, sharing their lives, their joys and their pains and helping to teach and to heal. Many missionaries made significant contributions to the retention and revitalization of these same cultures and languages.¹⁰ There is much in the historical relationship between the Catholic Church and Aboriginal Peoples to celebrate and build on. However, we are currently very aware of what was lost and this is of great concern to us.

⁸ See J.R. Miller, "Owen Glendower, Hotspur, and Canadian Indian Policy" in *Sweet Promises*, (Toronto, Buffalo, London, University of Toronto Press, 1991, pp. 323-352). At page 333 he says "...the conventional view of residential schools fails to note that the system never reached more than a minority of young Indians and Inuit." Thomas Lascelles in *Indian Residential Schools* says "Historically, most Native students never went to residential schools. The majority attended day schools on their reserves, or mixed schools in nearby towns or cities. All told, roughly 100,000, perhaps less than one in six, were educated in the residential schools, either exclusively or for a specific period."

⁹ See Wolfgang Jilek, *Indian Healing: Shamanic Ceremonialism in the Pacific Northwest Today* (Surrey, British Columbia and Washington: Hancock House Publishers, 1982), where he discusses the symptoms of "anomic" depression as rooted in several generations of powerlessness caused by colonization.

¹⁰ Many missionaries who worked in the past and many others who are working with the Native Peoples of Canada today, made great efforts to learn Native languages, to discover their internal rules and to produce learning and teaching instruments. The missionaries launched several periodicals in Indian and Innuktitut languages. Some go back as early as 1900 and one periodical has had as many as 1,200 subscribers. One of these written in a stenography invented by Father Jean-Marie Lejeune could be read by several Native groups in B.C. Over 300 original Indian and Innuktitut manuscripts exist. Among these are: 141 dictionaries (27 different Indian languages); 74 grammars (19 different languages); stories, legends, instructions, hymns and prayer books, catechisms and translations of biblical texts. There are, in



SPIRITUALITY

What was lost, or nearly so, was the free expression and celebration of the spirituality of the first Peoples of this land. This weakening of the spirit of the Native Peoples was the most profound loss at the heart of the more obvious losses of Native culture and land. This has been a loss for the Native Peoples, but it has also been a lost opportunity of enrichment for this country and our Church. As our North American culture becomes ever more consumed by materialism, we are profoundly in need of learning the values from the wise spirituality of the original Peoples.

The Catholic bishops of Quebec, in their Pastoral Letter on the Aboriginal Issue, described the importance of a revitalized Native Spirituality for non-Native Peoples who are questioning the materialism of modern culture:

This Aboriginal renewal implies a questioning of western society's present orientations. The enormous expenditures on military armaments, the exaggerated consumption of energy, the materialist spirit replacing a true spirituality fuels disenchantment and disapproval among natives. Many of their leaders voluntarily subscribe to Thomas Banyacya's message portending the imminent end of the world unless a spiritual renewal and restoration of the universal circle of humanity among all peoples emerges.

Non-natives themselves question their own civilization's postulate. The industrial society is going through a major crisis. This society, characterized as developed, is more and more violent. People feel increasingly dominated by the imperatives of productivity and victimized by the needs of efficiency. They are evaluated almost only in terms of their profitability. The deep meaning of life, work and human relations is put aside, as is often the spirit of generosity.

...This is the global context in which the Aboriginal Peoples are entering today. We are increasingly aware that several of their demands not only aim at their salvation but ours also. Their problem of survival and fulfillment also becomes ours when major challenges await us at the end of the 20th century. Instead of seeing Aboriginals' claims as threatening or being opposite to our own interests, shouldn't we instead see in this, a sign of the times, a word calling upon us, an invitation to cooperate together for the salvation of humanity? (September 1992, paragraphs 16, 17, and 19)

addition, another 226 printed works written in Native languages. A recent publication of a Français-Cri dictionary is one of seven works on or concerning Native languages and culture by missionaries in the past year and a half alone.



It is important for all of us that the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada reclaim their spiritual strength – a strength which has survived even the massive efforts to weaken it.

VICTIMIZATION

A more searching examination of the history of Canada may temper the tendency to caricature the Aboriginal Peoples as “victims”.

While part of the healing process surely includes the admission of victimization, the full process of liberation involves the acknowledgment that a human being is always more than a victim.

The healing of memories surely includes admitting the weaknesses of the Church, government and society, and acknowledging the wounds of the Native Peoples. The challenge, however, is to do this in such a way as to provide sufficient energy or motivation to embark on the long journey together into the future.

For this journey, we must trust in the strength, and skills and inner power of the Native Peoples. We must trust in the strength of the water and Spirit which we share. We must believe in the power of the Spirit to change not only our own hearts and minds but also those of our fellow citizens.

We believe that the primary task of this Royal Commission is to take the strengths of the Aboriginal Peoples seriously, to affirm them, and to count on those strengths. It would be an historic tragedy if this Commission based its recommendations solely on the victimization of Native Peoples. This would be a further, and more profound, spiritual destruction. It would be equally tragic if this Commission made recommendations which presumed that non-Native Peoples were only victimizers. We must summon and count on the basic decency and strength of our fellow citizens. We must presume on the capacity of the peoples of this country, Native and non-Native, to effect change on personal and political levels.

There is a power for justice and goodness in this land that is waiting to be called forth. We must summon once again a vision of justice flowing like a mighty river. As spiritual leaders, we are committed to issuing a strong and clear call to affirm the strength and dignity of all peoples.



2 RIVER OF JUSTICE WATERS OF SALVATION

It is our conviction that Native Peoples will be strengthened even further by the revitalization of Native spirituality and by the enrichment of the life of Native communities through self-government and just settlement of land claims. After a long and damaging history, there are signs of life to be seen in those Native Peoples who have found a way to express themselves – whether artistically, politically, economically or spiritually. As such self-expression occurs, people can be transformed and help others to transform themselves by “imaging” someone healed and healthy, someone with joy and purpose, someone who has transcended the pain – a new people. Artists, ceremonial dancers, singers, business developers, counsellors, therapists, educators and spiritualists are in the process of creating a positive spiritual identity.

THE STRENGTHENING OF NATIVE SPIRITUALITY

Inculturation

The strengthening of Native spirituality within Christianity is a source of great hope for all of us. Since the Second Vatican Council, the Church has made serious efforts to recognize various cultural expressions of Christianity. These expressions have enriched the treasure of the faith in its catholicity or universal character. By entering these cultures, the Gospel takes up what is best in them, while also transforming what is not in accord with the plan of God for individuals and peoples.

In a recent visit to Mexico, Pope John Paul II reiterated the Church's respect and appreciation for cultural diversity. In his address to the Indigenous Peoples of America, he said:



You have received, dear indigenous brothers and sisters of America, a rich heritage of human wisdom and, at the same time, you have been entrusted with your peoples' hopes for the future. The Church, on her part, openly affirms every Christian's right to his own cultural heritage, as something inherent in his dignity as a person and a child of God. In its authentic values of truth, goodness and beauty, this heritage must be recognized and respected.¹¹

Native Spirituality and Christianity

Native Peoples who are members of our Church live their cultural values, both religious and social, within the tradition of the Catholic faith. The Church appreciates this development of a Native Catholic spirituality and a Native expression of Catholicism. This spirituality is characterized by an innate harmony with all of creation and all peoples, by the importance it attaches to individual and community healing, and by the conviction of a need for greater justice. All of these traits of Native spirituality are present in a particular way in the Church because of the contributions of Native Peoples by their presence and their spirituality. The Native spiritual voice is now finding greater resonance in the broader Christian and social worlds. Native Christianity today is marked by the development of a theology that comes from Native prayer, culture, and experience. The non-Native members of the Church have an ongoing role of spiritual accompaniment in this period of revitalization and renewal.

As bishops, we have encouraged Native Catholic leaders to take increasing responsibility for the faith life of their communities. In a recent pastoral letter, the Ontario bishops said:

We ask our Native Peoples to develop Native spirituality within our shared Catholic faith, to find a truly Native Catholic expression of devotion and faith within the Church. We are aware that many ceremonies and traditions of the Native Peoples may have been misunderstood and too easily pushed aside. The Sacred Pipe, the Vision Quest, the Fast, and the Sweat Lodge are gifts that your ancestors passed on to you as ways of relating to the Creator and to

¹¹ Pope John Paul II, "The Church is Committed to Teaching Appreciation for Cultural Diversity", in *L'Osservatore Romano*, August 25, 1993.



each other – practices understood in the light of the Good News of Christ. Search the Scriptures and let the Great Spirit speak to you through His Word, so that you can develop a deeper understanding of your own spirituality. We encourage all priests, brothers and sisters who work with you to help you develop ways of expressing Native spirituality within the Catholic Church. (Rediscovery and Re-Evangelization, August 15, 1992)

We also recognize that for some Native Peoples, Christianity and Native spirituality are mutually exclusive. We are committed to responding to this belief in a spirit of dialogue and respect, and to encouraging Native Peoples to join in the conversation between Christianity and Native spirituality. We recognize that the survival and the contemporary renaissance of Aboriginal spiritualities are a powerful “sign of the times” – a sign that challenges the Church in its mission to Aboriginal and other peoples within the Canadian context. We will continue to explore the possibility of establishing channels of communication between our own spiritual heritage and Aboriginal spiritualities.¹²

¹² Much of the Church's emphasis on the role and efficacy of dialogue can be found in the document by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for Evangelization of Peoples, Dialogue and Proclamation (1991). In paragraph 41 of the document, it is stated "Sincere dialogue implies, on the one hand, mutual acceptance of differences, or even of contradictions, and on the other, respect for the free decision of persons taken according to their conscience." It goes on in paragraph 42, to identify four different yet interrelated forms of dialogue: dialogue of life, where people strive to live in an open and neighbourly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows; dialogue of action, in which Christians and others collaborate for the integral development and liberation of people; dialogue of theological exchange, where specialists seek to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritages; and dialogue of religious experience, where persons rooted in their own religious traditions share their spiritual riches.



STRENGTHENING OF THE LIFE OF NATIVE COMMUNITIES

Churches' Involvement in Action for Justice for Aboriginal Peoples

Since the 1969 debate over the White Paper on Native Peoples, our Church has been consistently and intensely involved in the Aboriginal struggle for justice and self-determination. In the 1970s a new generation of Native leadership emerged, challenging the Churches to use their power and influence for the sake of justice. Within the Church itself there was a growing awareness that the Church must cast its lot with the poor. In 1971 the Synod of Bishops on Justice in the World placed priority on action for justice and participation in the transformation of the world as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel. This theological theme provided a base for various papal and episcopal statements in solidarity with the Aboriginal Peoples throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

Our commitment to struggles for Aboriginal justice was greatly strengthened during this period by the ecumenical cooperation among Canada's major Churches. In 1975, the Catholic, Anglican and United Churches formed **Project North** as an ecumenical action programme in response to the struggles for justice in the North. Other denominations subsequently joined (Mennonites, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Christian Reformed, Society of Friends), as did Roman Catholic missionary congregations (Oblates and Jesuits). Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, **Project North** assisted the Churches in building support and solidarity with Native organizations around a variety of justice issues. In the 1980s the **Aboriginal Rights Coalition** replaced **Project North** and took on a broader mandate.

A list of various interventions made by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) and with other Churches in solidarity with the Aboriginal quest for justice can be found in Appendix A to this document. However, a few efforts are worth mentioning because they illustrate both our longstanding commitment to the recommendations that we will present to this Commission as well as our capacity to contribute to the work of the Commission.



Interventions of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB)

The CCCB's first major statement regarding Aboriginal rights was in 1975: Northern Development: At What Cost. This was a Labour Day statement on the development of energy resources and its impact on Native Peoples.

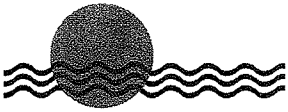
Soon after, the CCCB was very active around the Berger Commission hearings. The Conference's Social Affairs Commission presented a brief and another half dozen Catholic bishops actively participated in these hearings which were crucial to the life of Native communities and to the future of the country. Numerous Catholic presentations were also made at hearings into the various mega-projects that were proposed for the North.

In June 1981, the CCCB initiated A Cry for Justice From the North, a week of solidarity events and activities in 30 cities across Canada, relating to the implications of northern development. It became evident to us that there were people from the South who cared passionately about the land and people of the North. We were able to tap into a wellspring of decency and concern in the country.

On November 17, 1981, the CCCB asked the Prime Minister of Canada to recognize the Aboriginal and treaty rights of Aboriginal Peoples in the new Canadian Constitution. Again in 1987, we wrote the Prime Minister questioning the implications of the Meech Lake Accord on Aboriginal rights and concerns.

At various times we were involved in specific issues located within a Native community, including Lubicon land claims, low-level test flights and bombing practices in Labrador, post-secondary education funding for Native students, and a just solution of the Oka crisis.

It is important to note that we see our efforts with Aboriginal Peoples in Canada as linked to the efforts of Latin American bishops and the Aboriginal Peoples of that continent. In the 1970s and early 1980s, we received inspiration and insight from the leadership given during the struggles of the Aboriginal Peoples of the Amazon. Communication networks were also then set up between our Social Affairs Commission and Church-sponsored projects in Brazil and other Latin American countries. The Canadian Catholic Organization for



Development and Peace played a key role in facilitating an exchange between Church leaders and pastoral agents involved in Aboriginal issues in both Canada and Latin America. In September 1992, we issued a major document entitled Towards a New Evangelization in which we reflected on the 500 years of evangelization in the Americas and the continuing concerns for justice for the Aboriginal Peoples of the Americas.

Of course, much more could have been done, but what was done with a small staff and limited funds is a matter of pride for all of us. Throughout these years of struggle, we became even more convinced that the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada can and must regain their strength through the process of self-determination. We share in the conviction of Pope John Paul II who in his 1987 visit to Fort Simpson reaffirmed his commitment to Native self-government:

Once again I affirm the right to a just and equitable measure of self-government, along with a land base and adequate resources necessary for developing a viable economy for present and future generations.¹³

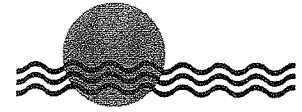
Ecumenical Interventions

For many years, the Churches have worked together and with Aboriginal Peoples for the constitutional rights of Aboriginal Peoples. The Churches' actions were in response to an appeal in 1981 from six Native political leaders for support of the recognition of Aboriginal Peoples' rights in the new constitution. In their letter of November 9, 1981 to the leaders of Canadian Churches, the Native leaders said:

The events of November 5th have proven to us that we have no real allies amongst the political leaders of this country. Our only recourse is an appeal to public opinion. We believe that the majority of Canadians, especially Christians, will sympathize with our demands and recognize the injustice that has taken place.

We call upon the leaders of the major Canadian Churches to help us in this regard. Your involvement with Native issues in recent years has established a solid bond of trust between us. Now,

¹³ Pope John Paul II, "May Canada Be a Model for the World in Upholding the Dignity of the Aboriginal Peoples", in *L'Osservatore Romano*, October 5, 1987.



at this critical moment in our history, we need your support more than ever.

In 1983, Project North sponsored an action campaign (including letter-writing and forums) around the First Ministers' Conference. The campaign included the preparation and circulation of one million copies of an educational pamphlet called You Can Help Write the Next Chapter in Canada's History. In 1984 and 1985, the Churches met with Aboriginal leaders on constitutional questions, and the Churches were observers at the First Ministers' meetings on Aboriginal rights during those years.

During the Meech Lake debate in 1987, Church leaders, in a joint pastoral statement¹⁴ on Aboriginal Rights and the Canadian Constitution, urged their fellow citizens to enter into "a new covenant" with the Aboriginal Peoples. We encouraged Canadians to recognize and guarantee the rights of Aboriginal Peoples to be distinct people, to have an adequate land base, and to have the right to self-determination.

Self-Government

We believed then and we do now that these basic dimensions of Aboriginal rights need to be addressed through the recognition and implementation of Aboriginal self-government in Canada.

Self-government is the means by which Aboriginal Peoples could give concrete expression of themselves as distinct peoples, develop the economic potential of their own lands, and design their own cultural, social and religious institutions to meet the needs of their own people. Through this process, Aboriginal Peoples could break the bonds of dependency and retain a sense of human dignity and self-worth as self-determining peoples and nations in this country.¹⁵

We recognized then, and still do, that there is a great diversity among the various Aboriginal Peoples and groups in Canada which needs to be recognized and respected in negotiations regarding self-government.

¹⁴ A New Covenant: A Pastoral Statement by the Leaders of Christian Churches on Aboriginal Rights and the Canadian Constitution, (February 5, 1987).

¹⁵ A New Covenant



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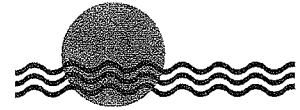
There can be no single, uniform model applicable to all Aboriginal Peoples. While recognizing this to be a new distinct level of government in Canada's political structure, it is important to remain open to a variety of options in response to diverse needs and circumstances. Yet whatever forms of Aboriginal self-government are negotiated, it is essential that several basic components are ensured. These include an adequate land-base, sufficient financial resources, and appropriate decision-making powers required for the exercise of self-government at this level.¹⁶

This was the position of the Church leaders in 1987 and it remains ours now. The Charlottetown Accord collapsed in 1992 for a variety of reasons. However, we do not believe that the failure of this one political accord can or should mean the end of the Aboriginal dream of self-government. We will continue to support the Aboriginal desire for self-government in concrete and public ways. Together with many Native Peoples, we are aware that we are entering into choppy waters as we move in the direction of Aboriginal self-government. We anticipate that, in the exploration of this new path, some will lose their way. There will be disagreements and confusion. Mistakes will be made. As the waters of history are stirred, they will seem murky and will not be calm for some time.

Nevertheless, we are convinced that this is the way of life; this is the only way new and better worlds open up before us. Mistakes have been made and will be made by anyone who enters into a new and strange land. To live in fear of mistakes and to refuse to explore a new way is to remain trapped by the mistakes of the past, rather than being invited to a certain humility regarding the inevitable mistakes that we are making even now. It is not primarily our task to challenge the weaknesses and failings within the Aboriginal communities. There are people within the Aboriginal communities who speak as prophets to their own people – challenging the mistakes, inviting their people to dignity and self-determination. We are encouraged, for example, by the prophetic voices within the Aboriginal communities which are being raised to protect the rights of Native women and children in the process of social and political reform.

That there will be suffering and pain in the process of establishing Aboriginal self-government is to be anticipated. Our hope is that this

¹⁶ A New Covenant



is the suffering and pain of the birth of a new way of being. We support the Commission's position on self-government.¹⁷ We must not wait for a re-opening of a constitutional process.

Self-government must also be accompanied by strategies for social and economic renewal both within the Aboriginal communities and the rest of society. We hope that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities will establish equal partnerships to identify together regional development objectives that are of common interest and benefit to all. These partnerships could lead to a new economic, cultural, and social project that is fully inclusive. These initiatives could challenge the provincial and federal governments to adopt new economic policies that support strategies emerging from and managed by the people and communities in the regions.

In 1987, we believed that this country faced a "moment of decision" regarding its relationship with its Aboriginal Peoples. What was true then is even more true now. Throughout the history of this country the dreams and hopes of the Native Peoples have been shattered on the shoals of broken promises. How long can a dream be deferred?

¹⁷ This position is developed in the Royal Commission's commentary, Partners in Confederation: Aboriginal Peoples, Self-Government, and the Constitution, (Ottawa, Ministry of Supply and Services, 1993).



Our desire is to chart a new course with the Aboriginal Peoples of this country. ~~This is not the time to drift with the current.~~ (At every level of government, in each Native community, and in each Church and religious group we must summon the political will to change our present course – to alter the drift to despair.)

We have indicated the many and strong public statements that we have issued in solidarity with the Aboriginal Peoples. However, we know it is not enough to talk about justice. There must be people who love justice, and strive for it with all their hearts. It is not enough to talk about equality; there must be people who value the dignity of others as a matter of course. It is not enough to talk about respect; there must be people who are willing to guarantee the rights of others through daily acts of decency.

COMMITMENTS BY THE CANADIAN CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops is prepared to make the following commitments:

- 1) Within the Catholic community, we are committed to **educating our people** at the most foundational level. In their hearts and minds there must be a profound and vital sense of the dignity of each person and of the value of diverse cultures. We are committed to creating the possibilities for non-Native Christians to understand the wisdom, the strength and the contribution of the Aboriginal Peoples of this land. We are committed to education that will also make our people more conscious of the ways in which the image of God has been defaced through the injustices done to the Aboriginal Peoples. We will increase awareness of the rights of Aboriginal Peoples, the history of cultural oppression, and the dangers of cultural arrogance. We will share our conviction that each person in our faith community has a moral responsibility to do



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- what he or she can to support Native claims for self-government and a just resolution of land claims.
- 2) We will increase our efforts to proclaim the social teaching of the Church, inviting the People of God to be agents of change and builders of **authentic social economic** and **cultural development** that guarantees respect for the dignity of individuals and peoples.¹⁸
 - 3) We reaffirm the commitments that were made at the Saskatoon Conference on **Residential Schools** to
set up, in collaboration with Aboriginal Peoples, a process for disclosure, which respects confidentiality, and for healing of the wounds of any sexual abuse that occurred in Residential Schools
and to
establish local forums of dialogue or other avenues for listening that will bring together former students and their families and the religious, clergy and lay staff who were involved in the schools so that they may reflect on their experience and work together towards healing and reconciliation.
 - 4) We support the ongoing work of the **National Working Group on Residential Schools** toward healing and dialogue.
 - 5) We will set up the means of affirming the dignity of Aboriginal Peoples in the Church, of fostering an understanding of their **cultural and spiritual traditions**.
 - 6) We will continue to explore the possibility of establishing channels of communication between our own spiritual heritage and Aboriginal spiritualities.
 - 7) We will endeavour to call Aboriginal Peoples to **leadership in their Church communities**, and we are committed to respecting as much as possible the Native world view and forms of decision-making.
 - 8) We will continue to support the rights of Aboriginal Peoples to **self-government** and a just resolution of **land claims**.
 - 9) We will continue to dialogue and journey with the Aboriginal Peoples as they continue their voyage of **spiritual discovery** and their quest for **social and economic justice**.
 - 10) We will continue to support Native persons who are experiencing cultural and social marginalization in Canada's urban centres.
 - 11) We reaffirm our commitment to **working with other Churches and with Aboriginal Peoples** for economic, social and constitutional justice.

¹⁸ The promotion of the integral development of the communities is a part of our understanding of mission. See, for example, Pope Paul VI: On Evangelization in the Modern World (Evangelii Nuntiandi), (1975).



RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMMISSION

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops also respectfully makes these recommendations to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples:

- 1) That the Commission encourage the development of programmes and vehicles to **combat racism**, including forums for dialogue and cultural exchange.
- 2) That the Commission promote **public education programmes** that include the Aboriginal perspective of history and cultures. Such courses should communicate not only the weakening of Native spirituality and culture, but also the enduring strength and wisdom of these peoples.
- 3) That the Commission encourage all levels of government to establish effective **employment equity programmes** for Aboriginal Peoples.
- 4) That the Commission encourage the media to ensure that Aboriginal Peoples are fairly represented in **public information and entertainment programmes**.
- 5) That the Commission take concrete steps to ensure federal and provincial mechanisms for a just settlement of **land claims** and for **self-government**.
- 6) That the Commission examine the involvement of the federal government and the whole of Canadian society in the creation, development and maintenance of the **residential schools**.
- 7) That the Commission urge the federal government to take steps to assure that adequate funding is made available for the **post-secondary education** of Aboriginal students.



4 CONCLUSION

As Christians and Church leaders, we believe in the power of truth and decency in this country. We also believe in the revitalizing power of the water and Spirit that we share.

To our Aboriginal brothers and sisters we say that we want to continue to journey with you. Let us strengthen one another in the great process of discovering a new way of being partners together.

To the non-Native members of the Catholic community we say that our commitment to our Native brothers and sisters is not only a commitment for their sakes. It is a commitment to a better future for all of us. It is an act of faith in God who has pitched a tent among us all. To struggle with the Native Peoples is also to affirm our belief in the vastness of the Spirit of God.

To our missionaries of the past and present we say that we are now embarking on a new voyage of spiritual discovery which will summon all the courage, imagination and holiness that was present in the past. Let us not be paralysed by past mistakes. Let them, instead become an incentive for a clearer and bolder commitment to the future. A new horizon and a new relationship are opening up with the Aboriginal Peoples. The waters are uncharted, the way is unclear. We believe now is the way of faith.

To the representatives of all levels of government we say that this is the hour of opportunity for you. In a time when citizens have grown cynical about political leadership, you have the possibility of acting with creativity and integrity. We call on you to help strengthen the hope that is growing in the Aboriginal communities. You have the power to enact policies and legislation that will strengthen these communities in their desire for justice.



To our fellow citizens we say that the struggle together with Aboriginal Peoples is also a struggle for the heart and soul of our nation. There is a fault line in the foundation of this country. The undermining of Aboriginal culture has left all of us less whole, less human. We trust in your sense of decency. May you also trust all that is best in yourselves and in all the Peoples of this land. Let us decide now to rebuild the foundation of Canada on the basis of this trust.

The desire for justice flows like a mighty river deep within us and among us. It may be diverted, it may ebb and flow, it may even appear to run dry at times. However, for People of the Spirit, this river of justice moves us always as a memory and hope.

October 27, 1993



APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF INITIATIVES TAKEN BY THE CANADIAN CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONCERNING NATIVE PEOPLES' STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE

November 28, 1969

Statement by the CCCB to Government of Canada pledging support and cooperation for Native land claims and other rights.

1975

Labour Day message – *Northern Development: At What Cost?* – a pastoral statement on the development of energy resources and its impact on Native Peoples.

March 7-13, 1976

National Week for N.W.T. Land Claims saw teams of Indian, Métis and Inuit spokespersons from N.W.T. move across the country telling the story of their struggle for a just settlement on their land claims. Some members of the Social Affairs Commission took part by speaking at various events.

April 17, 1976

Telex to the Prime Minister by the Social Affairs Commission regarding the postponement of offshore drilling rights in the Beaufort Sea until adequate safeguards are taken to protect environment and consultation with Native communities affected.

April 1976

Presentation of brief to phase IV of the Berger Commission hearings in Yellowknife, *Colonial Patterns of Resource Development: A Case Study of the Native Peoples' Struggle in the Amazon Basin of Brazil and its Implications for the Northwest Territories*. The study was prepared jointly by the Social Affairs desk and the Corporate Action Research Project. (Note: It was reported that approximately 20% of the 500 presentations to the southern hearings of the Berger Commission on the Mackenzie Valley pipeline came from Church



groups. Approximately 47% of the Church presentations were identified as Roman Catholic. A half dozen bishops actively participated in the hearings.)

June 3, 1976

A statement to the Berger Commission by the Social Affairs Commission.

March 1977

Presentation of brief to the National Energy Board hearings on the Mackenzie Valley pipeline by the Social Affairs Commission Chair.

1977

Letter to Prime Minister by the Social Affairs Commission Chair concerning the proposed Polar Gas Project.

October 1977

Letter to Prime Minister Trudeau and Hon. Hugh Faulkner by Social Affairs Commission Chair regarding the Proposed Polar Gas Project to bring natural gas from the High Arctic to southern Canada. The Canadian Church leaders' 1976 statement to the Prime Minister and Federal Cabinet, *Justice Demands Action*, was attached to the letter.

April 26, 1978

Telex to Minister of Indian Affairs by the Social Affairs Commission and Human Rights Committee expressing concern about the government's plan not to renew the freeze on mining exploration in the Baker Lake region of the N.W.T. Fear that uranium companies would violate Aboriginal land rights of the Inuit and threaten wild life and livelihood of people in Baker Lake.

January 26, 1981

Telex to Prime Minister from the Social Affairs Commission Chair regarding Amax Corporation operation in Kitsault, B.C. and the Nishga Tribal Council urging full-scale independent inquiry on social and environmental impacts.

March 25, 1981

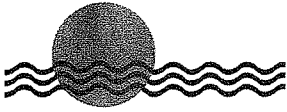
Telex to Prime Minister from the Social Affairs Commission Chair about government's recent proposals for oil and gas legislation (Bill C-48) – asserts that legislation would pose serious threat to Aboriginal Peoples of the North and other permanent residents of the territories.

June 1981

A Cry for Justice from the North – a week of solidarity events and activities (i.e., forums, workshops, and parish initiatives in 30 cities across Canada) surrounding major policy decisions taken by the government (National Energy Program – Bill C-48) about future development of the Canadian North.

August 14, 1981

Telex to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development from the Social Affairs Commission Chair, expressing appreciation at government's decision to delay construction of the Norman Wells Pipeline and to suspend work on PetroCan leases in the MacKenzie Valley for two years as requested



by Dene and Métis. Also urging government to take similar stance concerning specific amendments to Bill C-48.

September 17, 1981

Telex to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Minister of Health and Welfare from the Social Affairs Commission Chair expressing concern about reports that the federal and Quebec governments have failed to implement major portions of the James Bay agreement.

November 17, 1981

Telex to Prime Minister from Roman Catholic Northern bishops expressing concern about the decision of the First Ministers to eliminate Part II (section 34) of the Constitution package calling for the recognition and affirmation of the Aboriginal and treaty rights of Native Peoples in the Constitution.

December 13, 1982

Telex to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development from the Social Affairs Commission Chair expressing concern about reports that government has refused to honour its agreement-in-principle with the Committee for Original Peoples Entitlement (COPE) that was signed in October 1978.

June 10, 1983

Telex to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development from the Social Affairs Commission Chair joining with Northern Native Peoples and environmental organizations in urging government to reject the application of Gulf Oil and subsequent proposals for industrial development of the North Slope of the Yukon.

June 20, 1984

Telex to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans from the Social Affairs Commission Chair expressing support for government decision to recommend a full-fledged public inquiry into the Kemano Completion Project in Northwest B.C.

1984

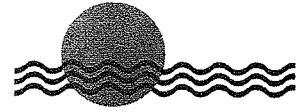
Letter to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development from the Social Affairs Commission Chair expressing appreciation for the government decision to reject proposals for industrial developments on the North Slope of the Yukon.

March 18, 1985

Letter to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development from the Social Affairs Commission Chair expressing concern about apparent trend towards increasing military operations affecting the homelands of Native Peoples in Northern Canada.

November 5, 1985

Telex to B.C. Premier and President of Haida Nation from the Social Affairs Commission Chair about logging on Lyell Island.



March 21, 1986

Telex to Prime Minister from the Social Affairs Commission Chair concerning settlement of Lubicon land claims as proposed by Fulton Report.

June 12, 1986

Telex to Prime Minister from the Social Affairs Commission Chair supporting recommendations of Cooligan Report on comprehensive claims policies affecting Aboriginal Peoples.

September 11, 1987

Letter to Prime Minister from the Social Affairs Commission Chair questioning the implications of the Meech Lake Accord on Aboriginal Rights as well as the government's intentions to stop funding to Native organizations for research and programmes on constitutional matters.

March 22, 1988

Letter to Minister of National Defence from the Social Affairs Commission Chair concerning low level test flights and bombing practices in Labrador and the possible establishment of a NATO Tactical Fighter Weapons Training Centre in Goose Bay.

October 7, 1988

Telex to Ministers of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and National Defence protesting the sudden arrest and jailing of eight Innu leaders, six women, and their pastor, and urging the government to meet with Innu leaders in an effort to resolve low level flight over Labrador conflict.

January 18, 1989

Telex to Ministers of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and National Defence from the Social Affairs Commission Chair, expressing gratitude about the government's agreement to meet with Innu leaders seeking resolution to demands for just settlement of Aboriginal land rights.

April 24, 1989

Letter to the Prime Minister from CCCB President about the government's decision to cut funding for post-secondary education of Native students.

1989

Telex to Minister of National Defence from the Social Affairs Commission Chair supporting Innu concerns about low level flying conducted at Goose Bay, Labrador.

May 29, 1990

Letter to Prime Minister from CCCB President concerning constitutional recognition of the rights of Aboriginal Peoples.

July 17, 1990

Letter to the Prime Minister from the Social Affairs Commission urging a just and moral solution to the conflict at Oka.



July 29, 1990

Statement by Bishop Bernard Hubert representing the CCCB at the march of "Peace and Justice" held at Oka entitled: *Achieving Peace at Oka.*

August 24, 1990

An appeal to the Mohawks, the Quebec and federal governments from the Social Affairs Commission Chair for immediate peaceful solutions in the Oka situation including removal of barricades, refraining from use of armed intervention and pursuit of a just settlement of the Mohawk claims.

August 28, 1990

CCCB Plenary Assembly entitled: *After Oka.* Proposal by the Social Affairs Commission to prepare information kit to serve as education tool concerning Native issues.

1990

Letter to Prime Minister from CCCB President expressing concern about the government's announced budget cuts to Native programmes.

August 28, 1990

Letter to Prime Minister from the Social Affairs Commission asking for the immediate set up of a negotiation process to ensure rights of Mohawks and a mechanism to find just solutions for claims (land rights and self-government) of Aboriginal nations across Canada.

August 28, 1990

Letter to Quebec Premier from the Social Affairs Commission asking for a negotiation process that would ensure Mohawks' rights and the setting up of a Commission to oversee friendly relations between Natives and Whites concerning the Oka situation.

September 1990

Letter to Prime Minister from the Social Affairs Commission Chair urging the government to meet with representatives of Native groups to settle for acceptable, just and moral solution to the Oka crisis.

September 18, 1992

Statement entitled: *Towards a New Evangelization* – a message by the Permanent Council of the CCCB on the 500th Anniversary of the Evangelization of the Americas.

It is worth noting that there were a number of initiatives concerning Native Peoples' struggles for justice, namely: a) fact-finding tours by Church leaders to the Lubicon Band; b) as a follow up to the papal visit, a petition campaign throughout R.C. parishes in support of Native self-determination; c) as a follow up to the Oka crisis, an information kit was prepared by the Social Affairs office and distributed to the dioceses to be used as an education tool to raise the awareness of Christians about Aboriginal rights struggles; d) meetings of Church leaders with politicians concerning various issues pertaining to Native Peoples.



SUMMARY OF INTERCHURCH INITIATIVES

June 1976

Statement of Evidence by Project North before the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry entitled: *A Call for a Moratorium: Some Moral and Ethical Considerations in Relation to the MacKenzie Valley Pipeline.*

March 1977

Telex to the Prime Minister by six Christian Church leaders regarding a government statement about Native land claims settlements.

1977

Submission to the Royal Commission on the Northern Environment by Project North.

1977

Submission to the Alaska Highway Pipeline Inquiry by Project North.

1978

Meeting in Saskatoon sponsored by Project North bringing together Native leaders and Christian communities and public interest groups from across the country. The meeting entitled *North/South Consultation*, concluded with a plan to organize a campaign of public awareness.

1979

Northern Native Rights Campaign – organized by Project North to raise public awareness about the concerns of the Northern Native Peoples for Aboriginal Nationhood in the context of the constitutional debate and the political future of the country. The purpose was also to mobilize public opposition to the Alaska Highway pipeline and other major development projects.

September 5, 1980

Telex to Minister of Environment by Project North Chair expressing shock about decision to proceed with EARP hearings on the Lower Churchill Falls Development despite appeals by Naskapi-Montagnais of Labrador.

January 6, 1981

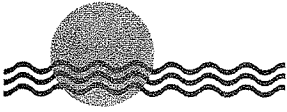
Telex to Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs from Protestant, Lutheran, United, Roman Catholic, Anglican (PLURA) Chair urging the government to initiate a full-scale public inquiry into oil tanker traffic in the Northwest Passage and that land use permit not be issued for non-renewable resource purposes without prior consent of affected municipalities.

February 3, 1981

Telex to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development from Project North concerning the government's failure to appoint a negotiator for the Dene Nation claims as promised.

March 9, 1981

Telex to Minister of Fisheries from Project North Chair expressing anger at government refusal to allow the public to express their concerns regarding



the Amax Mine Development. Also asking for a total moratorium on the Amax Development and full judicial examination of entire operations.

March 24, 1981

Statement by Northern Church leaders regarding Bill C-48 (National Energy Program) and the rights of Native Peoples.

November 17, 1981

Telex to Prime Minister from Church leaders expressing concern about the decision of the First Ministers to eliminate Part II: (Section 34) of the Constitution Package calling for the recognition of Aboriginal and treaty rights of Native Peoples.

1983

Action campaign (i.e., letter-writing, forums) sponsored by Project North concerning the First Ministers' Conference and constitutional rights of Aboriginal Peoples including preparation and circulation of one million copies of a pamphlet called *You Can Help Write the Next Chapter in Canada's History*.

May 22-23, 1984

Two-day series of meetings between Church representatives and national Native Peoples' organizations on Aboriginal rights and constitutional change.

August 1, 1984

Letter from Church leaders to all political parties asking them to clarify their positions on Aboriginal rights by responding to 12 questions.

March 1984 and April 1, 1985

Churches participated as observers in the First Ministers' Conferences on Aboriginal Rights and the Constitution.

February 4, 1985

Meeting between Church leaders and Native leaders on constitutional questions.

April 1, 1985

Project North statement on the *Entrenchment of Aboriginal Self-Government in the Constitution*.

1985

Submission to the West Coast Offshore Exploration Environmental Assessment Panel by Project North entitled *The Socio-Economic Impacts of the Proposed West Coast Offshore Petroleum Exploration on the British Columbia Coast*.

July 1986

Joint statement by Roman Catholic and Anglican bishops of Northern Canada in support of Native Peoples in their struggle to save fur trapping as a way of life.

February 5, 1987

Pastoral statement by the leaders of Christian Churches on Aboriginal Rights and the Canadian Constitution entitled *A New Covenant – Towards the*



Constitutional Recognition and Protection of Aboriginal Self-Government in Canada. A meeting with Aboriginal leaders followed the public launching of the text.

1987

Moment of Decision – Aboriginal Self-Government and the Constitution, published by Project North.

May 2, 1988

Telex by Church leaders to the Prime Minister and Premiers urging a resumption of constitutional talks with Aboriginal Peoples.

August 1, 1990

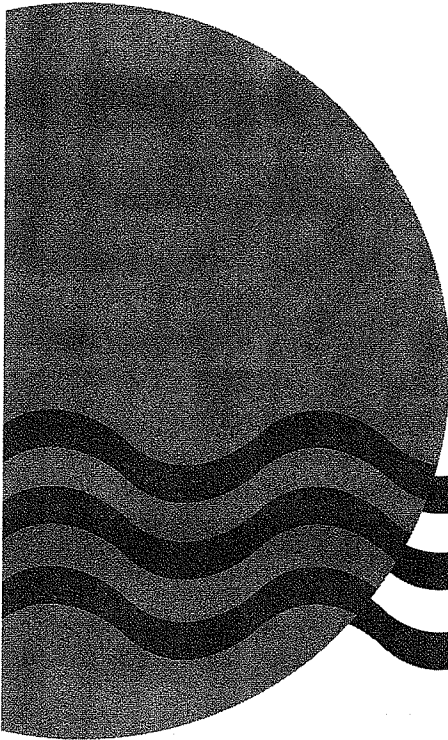
Aboriginal Rights Coalition brief to the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs regarding the standoff at Kanasatake and Kahnawke (Oka).

August 7, 1990

Letter to the Prime Minister from Church leaders suggesting political rather than military solutions to the Oka crisis.

August 29, 1990

Letter to the Prime Minister from Church leaders containing proposals for short-term and long-term solutions to the crisis at Oka and follow up meeting with the Minister of Indian Affairs on December 10, 1990.



WORKSHOP MODELS



Workshop One

The River of Then and Now

Objectives

- to gain a greater understanding of the impact of colonial history on Aboriginal Peoples
- to reflect on our own thoughts, opinions and values regarding contemporary issues facing Aboriginal Peoples

Time 2.5 hours (approximately)

Materials needed

- candle and woven cloth of natural fibres (as focus for centre of large circle)
- recording of nature or water music and cassette or CD player (optional for Step 3)
- copies of Appendix A – “The Mighty River’s Story” (read by facilitator in Step 3)
- flipchart and one piece of newsprint showing three guiding questions for Step 4 (questions should be concealed by a top sheet until needed)
- paper and pencils for participants to jot notes on (Step 4)
- copies of Appendix B – graphic of flowing river (for depicting future hopes in Step 6)
- masking tape or pins for posting Appendix B river graphic (Step 6)
- felt markers (Step 6)
- copies of Appendix C (concerns, values, challenges and actions for Step 7)
- refreshments

Physical environment

Arrange one large circle of chairs for the whole group and separate, smaller circles (five or six chairs) for small-group sharing. Place a woven cloth of natural fibres on the floor in the centre of the large circle. A candle and Appendix A (“The Mighty River’s Story”) can be placed on this cloth.



Process

- 1.** Welcome and personal introductions (10-15 min.)

Ask the participants to introduce themselves and say one sentence about why they accepted an invitation to come to this workshop.
- 2.** Introduction to the workshop (10 min.)

Introduce the participants to the purpose of the workshop using the objectives and information included in the Foreword to this booklet.

Point out that the workshop is intended to help us

 - to gain a greater understanding of the impact of colonial history on Aboriginal Peoples in Canada; and
 - to reflect on our own thoughts, opinions, and values regarding contemporary issues facing Aboriginal Peoples.
- 3.** Hearing "The Mighty River's Story" (15 min.)

Note to the Facilitator: "The Mighty River's Story" is simply a tool to get people talking about the issues that will be explored more deeply in Workshop Two. It is not meant to be an all-inclusive historical summary of the issues involved. Give participants copies of the story if they would like to follow along as it is being read. They will then be able to refer to it in Step 4 if they wish.

Invite participants to a moment of quiet to prepare themselves to listen attentively to the story told by the Mighty River. Light the candle, pick up the story (see Appendix A) and take a moment to settle in before reading the river's story. (*Note:* A recording of nature or water music could accompany the reading of the story as long as it enhances and does not overpower the reader's voice.) When the story is finished, place it back on the woven cloth beside the candle.
- 4.** Responding to "The Mighty River's Story" (20 min.)

Invite participants to take a few moments to reflect on the story individually. Refer to the three sample questions below (which have been written on the flipchart ahead of time) to aid the reflection process. Have paper and pencils available for those who want to make notes.

Sample questions:

 1. What touched you as you listened to the story?
 2. What do you think after hearing or reading it?
 3. Do you accept the story as it was? Would you like to write anything into the story?

Then invite participants to share their reflections with the large group. Comments are heard first on questions one and two, and then on question three.
- 5.** Refreshment break (15 min.)



6. The Mighty River carries future hopes (25 min.)

Participants come back into the large circle. Distribute copies of Appendix B and invite participants to think about their future hopes for their relationship with Aboriginal Peoples. Offer questions to stimulate a response, such as the following: Where could the river take us in the future? To what type of new land could it lead? What is my relationship with this river? What attitudes would I like to see flowing in this river in the future? Participants then add to the river graphic their own symbols, pictures or words to depict their future hopes. (Allow about five minutes for this part of the activity.) You could give a few examples of items to add to the graphic, such as the following: the words "mutual respect" written on the river; people walking together along the riverbank; or a peace pipe to symbolize hopes for future peace. Have felt markers available for participants to use during this activity.

Participants move into small groups to share their pictures, symbols or words with others and to describe the reasons or meaning behind their additions to the graphic. The pictures could be posted for others to see.

7. Concerns, values, challenges and actions (20 min.)

Invite each participant to create a list of the concerns, values, challenges and attitudes involved in our relationship with Aboriginal Peoples that have emerged for them as a result of what they have shared in the workshop so far. Give each person a copy of Appendix C to facilitate this reflection. Participants then share their list with one other person in the small group.

8. Ritual response (10-15 min.)

Participants return to the large circle. The candle is lit. Invite them to share one idea from their list with the whole group. After each idea is shared, everyone responds together in a refrain, such as "In your presence, God of our past, present and future, we voice our prayer."

Thank the participants for coming to the workshop and invite them to Workshop Two, which will further explore the commitments and recommendations found in the brief that was submitted by the CCCB to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

9. Refreshments

Refreshments could be served to those who wish to socialize after the workshop.



Appendix A The Mighty River's Story

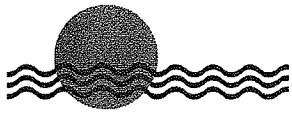
From the very beginning of time, I was known as a Mighty River with stories to tell. I am old now, but since the days of my youth and throughout the ages, I have known many people born of water and the Spirit. I have sustained them, carried them, and been a source of life to them. I long for you to hear of those I have known, of what my eyes have seen and of what my ears have heard.

For thousands of years, Aboriginal Peoples were at home in this land. In time, they welcomed European travellers from far-off places. These newly arrived travellers journeyed along the waters of this land and longed to build great empires. I remember that, for the Europeans, it was a time of struggle as well as one of enthusiasm, expansion and progress. It was a time of mutual relations with Aboriginal Peoples, of commercial partnership in fur trading, and of military alliances.

I remember the Christian missionaries' eagerness to share their faith – their generosity and courage and their efforts to act with love and compassion. It seems important to me now to hold these fond memories as I continue to tell you my story. Could it be that in these rekindled memories a new hope may be born?

I can't remember exactly how or even why things began to change, but change they certainly did! I remember the sadness I felt as long shadows of disharmony stretched across my waters. It seems that what began to shift in a rapid way at the beginning of the nineteenth century had deep roots in the past. Those who came from Europe in the seventeenth century already wanted to make this "new world" *their* world. Their culture and civilization were completely different from those of the indigenous peoples. Their vision of the world was influenced by a developed science and technology. Deeply convinced that their vision was superior to anyone else's, they imposed it on the others. Aboriginal Peoples increasingly lost their lands, their autonomy and the control of their lives.

Europeans felt that military alliances with Native Peoples were no longer necessary. With the decline of the fur trade, economic partnership eroded. Now that they were no longer allies and partners, Aboriginal Peoples began to be seen as a problem, as obstacles to new settlers and immigrants, or as wards in need of government protection and rehabilitation. I cried with deepening sadness as my waters became ever more muddied by the growing dissension between



Workshop One – Appendix A

those I had come to know and love so much.

The churches were influenced by the vision and the programme of the dominant European culture. In some ways, they opposed what they believed to be harmful to Native Peoples, but they fell short of the objectives proper to their mission as churches. They were too closely joined with the forces of European nation-building, expansion and assimilation.

I was aware, then that the growing tensions between Aboriginal Peoples and Europeans had many causes: the meeting of very different cultures; the outnumbering of Natives by Europeans; the Europeans' conviction that their vision and their ways were superior and could only improve the Aboriginal culture and way of life; the churches' commitment to the European expression of Christianity; the churches' ignorance of the human and religious values of Aboriginal Peoples. All of this contributed to the weakening of the spirituality and spirit of Aboriginal Peoples.

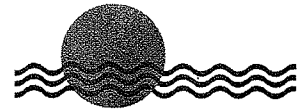
I am also aware that the institutions established by governments and churches to implement their vision were seen and used by various groups in different ways. For some people, these institutions, particularly the residential schools, were instruments of assimilation. For others they were tools to prepare for the world that was coming. Some remember the years spent in the schools as times of oppression and mistreatment; others say that those were the best years of their lives. I remember that children were forced to go to some schools, while other schools had waiting lists of willing candidates. It was forbidden for Native children to speak their own language at many

of the schools. At others, parents urged the staff to teach more English. I recall that the living conditions in those schools were hard, especially compared to today's standards. I also remember that sacrifices were made by many staff members to improve the conditions.

I hear of abuses committed by individuals, but I also remember the zeal and dedication of so many nuns, brothers, priests, and Native and non-Native staff members who wanted the students to live as a happy family. Some of the voices I hear certainly cry out for a profound examination of the history of those schools. It is essential to learn from the past in order to create new and beneficial relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Peoples.

As I hear these voices, I cannot help asking to what extent this history – in its negative and positive dimensions – is reflected in the present-day situation of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. Aboriginal leaders are equipped in new ways to fight for the rights of their people. More and more Aboriginal people are taking prominent and effective places in contemporary Canadian society. At the same time, many Native people are suffering the pain of alcohol and drug abuse. Many families have been torn apart. Many people live in substandard and overcrowded houses. Many continue to suffer great discrimination. The suicide rate in Aboriginal communities is very high.

The responsibility for the present situation cannot be attributed to one group or one institution only. It is a collective responsibility for which all, non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal alike, have to examine their consciences. One thing is certain: insofar as the cultural and spiritual values of Aboriginal

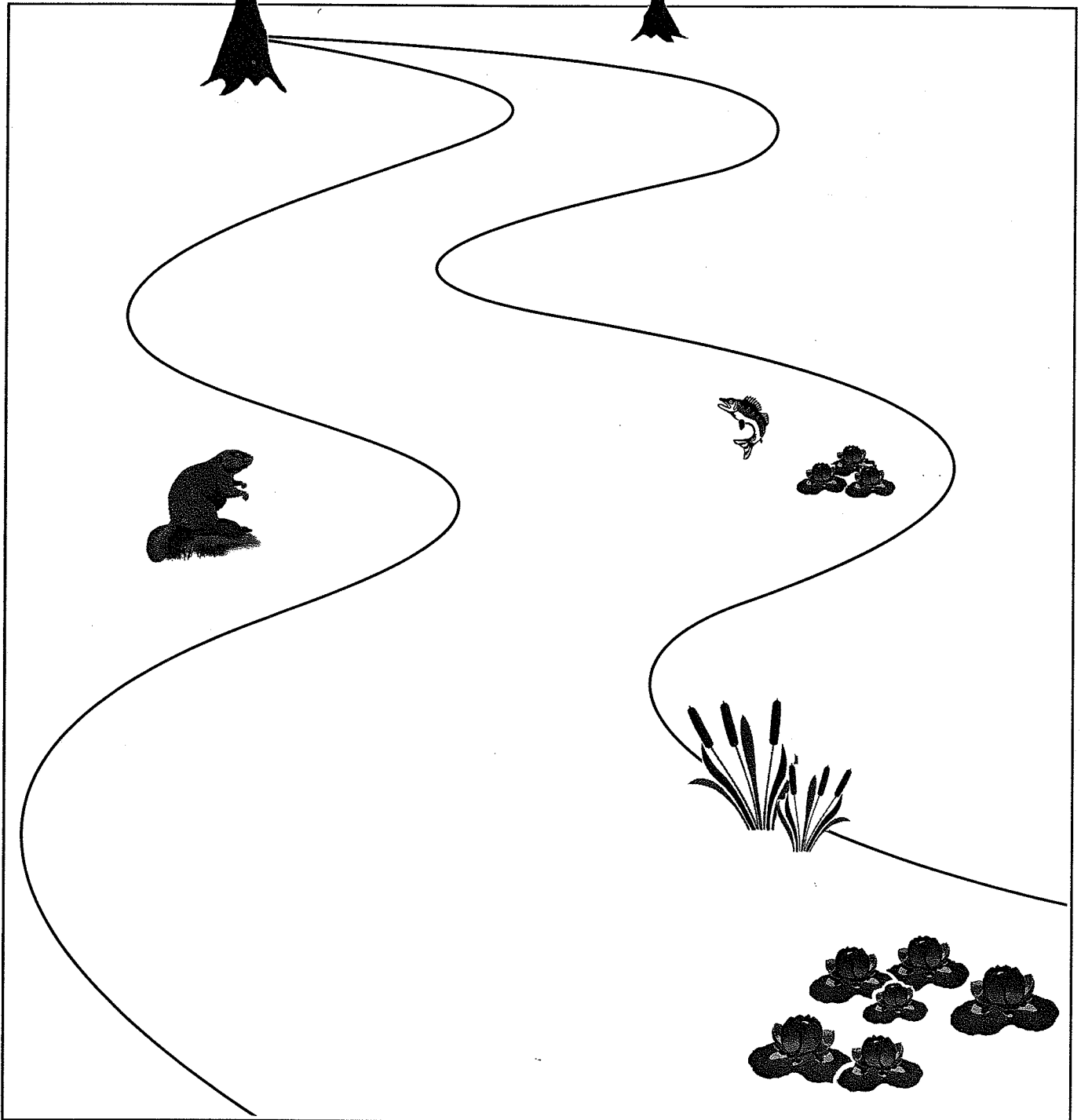


Peoples have been ignored, both the country and the churches have lost an opportunity for enrichment and have caused major damage to Aboriginal Peoples.

I have also heard repentant voices of hope who remember ripples of light upon my waters. These ripples of light that touch us even now, in our remembering of the past, reveal an enthusiasm to share faith; efforts to act with love and compassion; eagerness to walk with Aboriginal Peoples in order to share their sufferings; willingness to bear the burdens of the past; commitment to support Aboriginal struggles for personal and collective growth; and efforts to provide places where Native and non-Native Peoples may find common ground.

In the depths of my waters, I sense a power for justice and goodness in this land. It stirs within and eagerly waits to be called forth. New life surges within me as, once again, a vision of justice flowing like a mighty river is summoned. I long to live this crystal clarity and to become again a Mighty River of Justice – flowing, beckoning, promising, and sustaining a hope for transformation and a better world. I long to continue my story and to tell of a new community re-created by water and the Spirit.

Appendix B The Mighty River's History and Future





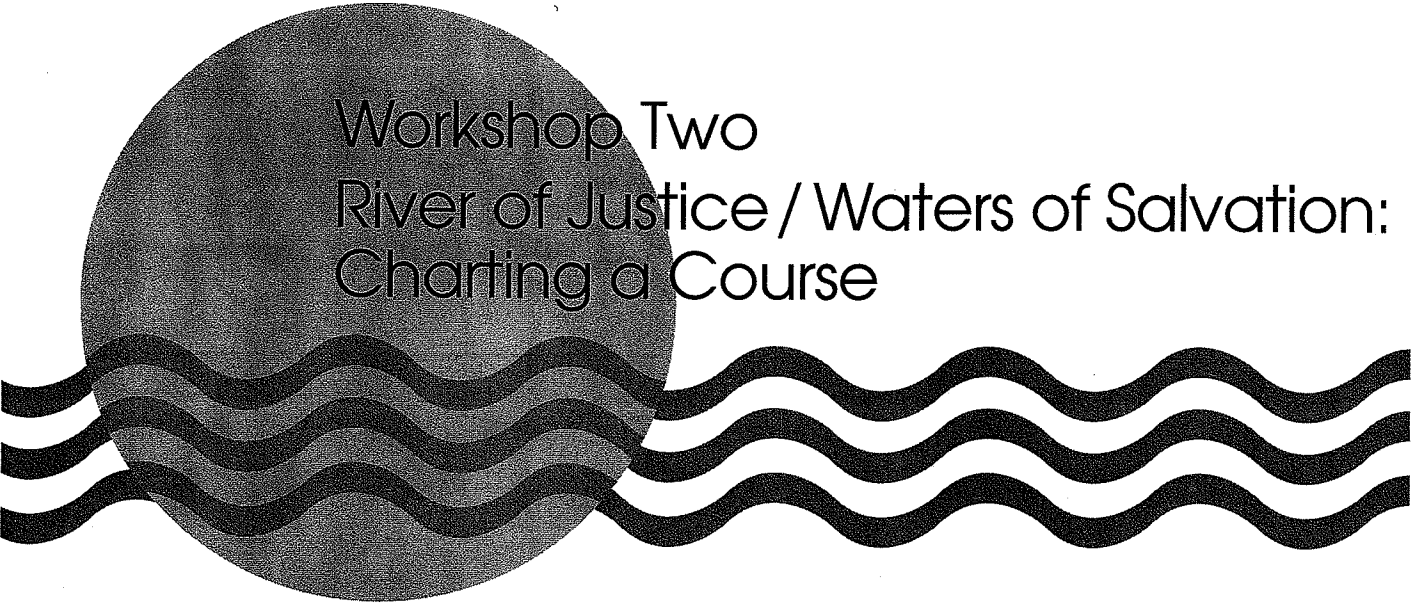
Appendix C
Our relationship with
Aboriginal Peoples in Canada

My concerns:

My values:

Challenges I foresee:

Actions to help meet the challenges:



Workshop Two

River of Justice / Waters of Salvation: Charting a Course

Objectives

- to explore three key issues regarding Aboriginal Peoples in Canadian society
- to explore the significance of the CCCB's commitments and recommendations regarding Aboriginal Peoples
- to reflect on our personal commitments to Aboriginal Peoples

Time 2.5 hours (approximately)

Materials needed

- candle and woven cloth of natural fibres (as focus for centre of large circle)
- copy of Appendix A from Workshop One – “The Mighty River’s Story” (placed on woven cloth)
- copies of the excerpts on each of the three key issues from the CCCB’s brief to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples: 1. Culture and spirituality (pp. 20-25); 2. Self-determination and land claims (pp. 26-31); and 3. Residential schools (pp. 16-19) – for small discussion groups in Step 4
- signs naming the three key issues to indicate areas for discussion groups (Step 4)
- copies of Appendix A – questions for guiding discussion groups (Step 4)
- paper and pencils for participants to jot notes on (Step 4)
- index cards containing CCCB’s commitments and recommendations from its brief to the Royal Commission (pp. 33-35) – short summary of one commitment or recommendation per card (Step 7)
- blank index cards (Step 7)
- masking tape for posting index cards (Step 7)
- refreshments

Physical environment

Arrange one large circle of chairs for the whole group and separate, smaller circles (five chairs) for small-group sharing. Place a woven cloth of natural fibres on the floor in the centre of the large circle. On it place “The Mighty River’s Story” and the candle from Workshop One. In the centre of the smaller circles, place copies of Appendix A and the appropriate excerpts from the CCCB’s brief to the Royal Commission (see Materials needed).



Process

1. Welcome (5-10 min.)

Welcome participants to Workshop Two. Offer a special word of welcome to any newcomers. (Newcomers could briefly introduce themselves.)

2. Introduction to the workshop (5 min.)

Make links to the previous workshop by recalling the focus and activities of "The Mighty River's Story" and participants' lists of concerns, values, challenges and actions. Provide a brief overview of the objectives for this workshop, pointing out that the workshop is intended to help us

- to explore three key issues regarding Aboriginal Peoples in Canadian society;
- to explore the significance of the CCCB's commitments and recommendations regarding Aboriginal Peoples; and
- to reflect on our personal commitments to the three key issues.

3. Opening prayer (5 min.)

In the large circle, link this workshop to the previous one, saying that the focus for this second workshop is "River of justice/waters of salvation." This theme will be explored through three issues: culture and spirituality, self-determination and land claims, and residential schools. Light the candle and gather everyone into a moment of silence. Lead the group in the following prayer or a similar one:

Lord God of Justice and Salvation,
We hold the memory of a history of a relationship between peoples,
which has been carried along in the river of time,
and has been washed and shaped through struggle and hope.
Throughout this workshop, help us to have hearts of openness and compassion,
so that we may be one with you
in charting a course for future justice and salvation.
Amen.

4. Exploring three key issues (45-50 min.)

Tell the participants that they will be joining a small group (no more than five people) to further explore one of the three issues relating to Aboriginal Peoples:

1. Culture and spirituality,
2. Self-determination and land claims; and
3. Residential schools.

Point to the area in the room where each topic will be discussed. Signs also mark the group areas.

Participants move to the group of their choice (they choose an alternate group if their first choice is already full). The centre of each small group circle contains copies of some reading material on the issue. Ask participants to take ten minutes or so to read the excerpt from the brief that relates to their issue and then discuss the material using the following questions: What is your understanding of the



issue you chose? How do you feel about this issue? (These two questions are found on the copies of Appendix A that are provided at the discussion areas.) Allow 30 minutes for the discussion. Ask each group to appoint someone to report to the large group. The reporter may want to take notes during the group discussion.

If there are a large number of participants, more than one group could examine a particular topic. It may also happen that participants are interested only in one or two of the issues.

5. Refreshment break (15 min.)

6. Sharing key issues (20-25 min.)

The small groups return to the large circle. The reporter from each group shares a synthesis of the group's conversation on its issue and its responses to the two questions from Appendix A.

At the end of the reports, invite participants to ask questions if they need clarification or to offer additional insights.

7. Charting a course: CCCB commitments and recommendations (20-30 min.)

Offer each participant an index card on which is written a short summary of one of the CCCB's commitments or recommendations from its brief to the Royal Commission (see "Charting a Course," pp. 33-35). Each participant reads the commitment or recommendation on his or her index card slowly and with conviction and then posts it on the wall. When all the cards have been read and posted, invite participants to walk around, reread the recommendations and commitments (if necessary), and silently reflect on their readiness to take some type of personal action. They are to write this action on a blank index card for themselves.

8. Closing ritual (10-15 min.)

Call participants back to the large circle for a brief closing ritual. (The candle should be lit at this point.) Mention that they will be invited to voice their prayer, hope or commitment in one of the following areas:

1. to our Aboriginal brothers and sisters...
2. to non-Native members of the Catholic community...
3. to missionaries of the past and present...
4. to representatives of all levels of government...
5. to our fellow citizens...

Gather everyone into a moment of silence and then raise one area of prayer at a time, using the words from the prayers on pp. 36 and 37 of the brief. After the first prayer, for "our Aboriginal brothers and sisters," invite participants to add their prayers for that area. This method is followed in sequence for each of the five areas.

At the conclusion of the prayer, the facilitator thanks the participants and invites them to exchange the sign of peace as a symbol of their solidarity with the needs and hopes of the community.

9. Refreshments

Refreshments could be served for those who wish to socialize after the workshop.



Appendix A
Key issues regarding Aboriginal Peoples

- What is your understanding of the issue you chose?

- How do you feel about this issue?



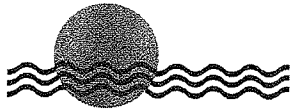
Resources for Additional Study

Popular Historical Texts

- John Webster Grant. *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians in Canada in Encounter Since 1534*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984.
- J.R. Miller. *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian – White Relations in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991.
- Bryce Richardson. *Drumbeat: Anger and Renewal in Indian Country*. Toronto: Summerhill Press/Assembly of First Nations, 1989.
- Art Solomon. *Songs for the People: Teaching on the Natural Way – Poems and Essays of a Nishnawbe Spiritual Teacher*. Toronto: NC Press Ltd., 1990.
- Bruce Trigger. *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered*. Kingston: Queen's University Press, 1985.
- Geoffrey York. *The Dispossessed: Life and Death in Native Canada*. Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1989.

Church Teaching

- Michael Stogre, S.J. *That the World May Believe: The Development of Papal Social Thought on Aboriginal Rights*. Montreal: Editions Paulines, 1992.
- Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. "Towards a New Evangelization." Sept. 14, 1992.
- Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops. "Rediscovery and Re-evangelization." Aug. 15, 1992.
- Assembly of Quebec Bishops. "First Nations in Quebec: Pastoral Letter Concerning the Situation of the Natives." Sept. 1992.



Videos

- *Spirit Within*
National Film Board of Canada (To order, call 1-800-267-7710)
- *The Human Edge: Discussion of the Movie "Spirit Within" with J. Norton, M. Castellano and A. Solomon*
TVOntario (To order, call (416) 484-2600)
- *When the Rivers Meet*
Films North Inc.
- *Dancing Around the Table* (Parts 1 and 2)
National Film Board of Canada (To order, call 1-800-267-7710)
- *Circle of the Spirit: A Saga of Native Americans in the Catholic Church*
United States Catholic Conference
(To order, contact USCC Publishing Services, 3211 Fourth Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20017-1194. Fax: (301) 209-0016).